



Farehouse Market offers tenants of the 600 W. Chicago building a place to relax, socialize, collaborate and refresh.

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Quest Food Management's Farehouse Market concept energizes dining for associates of Groupon, Big Ten Network, others at Sterling Bay's 600 W. Chicago

multitenant complex

Farehouse Market from Quest Food Management offers multiple food options to B&I tenants like Groupon, Big Ten Network, Barry Callebaut, Echo Global Logistics, Tempus and Jump Trading in Sterling Bay's renovated former Montgomery Ward complex in Chicago

Mike Buzalka | Feb 19, 2020

The 1.6-million-square-foot former Montgomery Ward catalog house at 600 W. Chicago Ave. in Chicago was recently renovated at a reported cost of around \$20 million by the Sterling Bay real estate development firm, a project that included the addition of a retail/dining mix called Farehouse Market operated by local food service management company Quest Food Management Services .

The more than a dozen tenants in the building include online deal vendor Groupon, Big Ten Network, chocolate/cocoa manufacturer Barry Callebaut, Echo Global Logistics, healthcare firm Tempus and Jump Trading. The total building population is around 7,500, and since the surrounding area has scant dining resources, the onsite B&I dining mix is a critical component of tenant services.

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The Farehouse Market array is easily accessible, situated directly near the building entrance.

And that's what Farehouse Market looks to deliver with a multiplatform mix that includes a dual-sided coffee/cocktail bar; a retail market that sells gourmet packaged goods including beer and wine, fresh foods ranging from charcuterie to a salad bar, and packaged grab-and-go selections; and three restaurants that offer customized, to-order selections ranging from personal pizzas and plant-based bowls to burgers and sandwiches. A photo tour of Farehouse Market is available elsewhere on this site.

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Farehouse Market had a soft opening of the retail market (called Market) and the coffee/cocktail bar on Jan. 29th, followed a week later by openings of the restaurants. These include:

- **Field**, which menus a plant-centric range of customizable options with several protein choices daily that are composed by counter staff on beds of greens or noodles;



Grano, an Italian street food concept that each day offers two flatbread choices and two Italian-style entrees such as lasagna, pictured left, or calzones, with sides, as well as eight-inch personal pizzas topped and cooked to order; and

- **Braze**, where customers can build bowls, burritos or sandwiches from a range of components, or get a daily special or personally customized burger.

The concepts are exclusive to this location. Quest partnered with a local restaurant branding agency called Ideation Studios to develop the brands.

“We had done a tenant survey with Sterling Bay and had about a thousand participate,” says Quest President Nick Saccaro. “It helped us narrow down where to focus as we didn’t want to be all things to all people because of space.”

Star power

The space—especially in the back-of-the-house—may be small, but the talent Quest attracted to run it isn’t, with a general manager who had previously managed restaurant concepts for Eataly in Chicago, and a chef who had previously operated a Michelin star restaurant in Paris.

Initially, the outlets have only been open during the week, with the Market open from 6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., the coffee bar from 6:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., the restaurants from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and the cocktail bar from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. However, Quest has recently experimented with opening on Saturdays for limited hours to take advantage of growing awareness and acceptance of Farehouse Market by the nearby community.

“We’re starting to get some offsite traffic in there,” says Saccaro. “There are tons of multi-family complexes [nearby] and we’ve started to see people coming in, particularly in the evening for drinks because there are not a lot of other options in this part of the city for whatever reason other than a couple coffee shops, but no rest or socialization spaces. It helps that the front of building is all glass on the first floor, so you can see right in [from the street] and see the activity going on.”

The neighborhood traffic complements in-house business, which has been growing not just at traditional mealtimes but at other times as well.

“I think we’ve been very pleasantly surprised to see the evening traffic in particular at the bar,” Saccaro offers. “It’s been super popular, so we’re starting evening foodservice at the bar with a limited appetizer menu and things like charcuterie. It really is turning out to be a pretty nice social hub for the building.”

Taking a break

During the day, the coffee bar sees a steady stream of traffic, which somewhat surprises him, says Saccaro, because a lot of the tenants offer free coffee in their spaces, but it does show how much a separate space in which to take a break is desired by the building’s population.

The Farehouse Market is located directly next to the building’s front entrance and easily accessible even from the remotest parts of the massive complex, which originally opened in 1909 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. At one time, it served as mail order pioneer Montgomery Ward’s national headquarters.

“When you walk in the space, to the right is the security entrance and to left is the coffee bar,” Saccaro explains. The concepts are arranged in a kind of triangle around a central space with seating of various types, from high tops and soft seats to community tables, as well as the bar seating.



A central seating area is surrounded by the different dining and retail outlets.

Such a large and largely isolated facility offers additional opportunities besides traditional meal service for an in-house dining operation, especially in areas like meeting and event catering, and Farehouse Market has already booked a couple of events that have completely reserved its space.

“With all the employers in there, I think we have a ton of opportunities to do catering in the space,” Saccaro notes. “We’re just starting to ramp up on that, but it is something we are counting on and very hopefully it will turn into a

great opportunity for us. This is primarily a GenX and Millennial population,” he adds, “and so there’s a need for amenities to attract and retain talent.”

One possibility is extending meal service to the offices. Saccaro says Quest is already talking to one tenant about doing daily catered foodservice for its employees in their workspace.



With no real dining or socializing alternatives nearby, Farehouse Market serves a critical role for the some 7,500 employees of over a dozen tenants who occupy the 600 W. Chicago building.

Other options include mobile pre-order and even delivery.

“We have just 6,000 square feet of servery and seating space, so we have capacity challenges we’ll have to address,” Saccaro admits. “One way is mobile ordering and we’ll be launching a mobile order pilot probably in next 30 to 60

days with one or two tenants so we're not opening the floodgates to everybody all at once."

Farehouse Market already has a mobile pickup area designed into the space, "so folks don't have to enter the fray of the day-to-day service to get their mobile order," Saccaro notes. "That will be an enormous area of focus for us and our [challenge] will be to see how we can make it more convenient."

Among options being considered is placing preorder kiosks on the tenant floors as a way to market the service.

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—*Nick Saccaro, president, Quest*

"Our tech partners tell us that kiosks get people to order the first couple times, and then they transition to using their phones," he says.

And then?

"And then I think it will be interesting to see if there will be a demand for us to do delivery," Saccaro says. "I'm not sure at this point what it will look like, but

with that many people in the building and that size footprint, we want to feel accessible for people and mobile ordering is one way to help do that.”

Down the line, Saccaro says he would like to explore opportunities offered by Sterling Bay’s expansion plans in the area, including a Riverwalk that connects with planned mixed-use development on the other side of the river, “so we may expand our off-hour service and become a little more of a destination dining” especially in the summer.

“I think the thing we’re really enjoying about this opportunity is the space where we’re at is such a great extension from a design standpoint of the overhaul Sterling has done to the building to restore it to the original art deco design of the space,” he summarizes. “And we also appreciate that they took a chance on a local firm like us that hasn’t really operated in this kind of space before.”

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